

Message Text

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SUBJ: REACTIONS TO PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS

REF: STATE 86289

1. SUMMARY. REACTION TO PRESIDENT FORD'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS CONSISTED MAINLY OF STRAIGHT NEWS COVERAGE BASED UPON NEWS AGENCIES' STORIES. THE CONTENT OF ARTICLES EMPHASIZED THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS ON RELATIONS WITH LA BUT ALSO COVERED REQUESTS TO CONGRESS FOR ADDITIONAL AID TO VIETNAM. ONLY ONE MAJOR EDITORIAL APPEARED WHICH DEALT DIRECTLY WITH THE ADDRESS AND IT WAS DEVOTED TO FAVORABLE COMMENTS ON THE PORTIONS DEALING WITH LA. TWO SHORT RELATED COMMENTARIES TREATED THE S.E. ASIA PROBLEM IN TERMS NOT, RPT NOT, UNFAVORABLE TO THE US. THE EVENTS IN SE ASIA SHOULD HAVE ONLY MARGINAL EFFECT ON COLOMBIAN PERCEPTION OF US POLICY IN LA. NEGATIVE EFFECTS WILL PROBABLY BE LIMITED TO VIEWS BY NORMALLY ANTI-US ELEMENTS THAT THE US NO LONGER IS ABLE TO COMMAND EFFECTIVE INFLUENCE OVER EVENTS OUTSIDE ITS BORDERS. END SUMMARY

2. FOL THE PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS ON APRIL 10, MAJOR COLOMBIAN NEWSPAPERS PROVIDED STRAIGHT FRONT PAGE NEWS COVERAGE OF THE PRINCIPAL POINTS IN THEIR APRIL 11 EDITIONS. REPORTING WAS BASED UPON STORIES FROM UPI, AP AND EFE. LIBERAL
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PAPERS EL TIEMPO AND EL ESPECTADOR CARRIED HEADLINES EMPHASIZING

THE PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION THAT VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR NOT BE EXCLUDED FROM THE SYSTEM OF GENERAL PREFERENCES. CONSERVATIVE DAILIES EL SIGLO AND LA REPUBLICA HEADLINES THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL AID FOR VIETNAM. THE TEXTS OF ALL NEWS STORIES HIGHLIGHTED THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS RE L.A.

3. THE ONLY MAJOR EDITORIAL DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS WAS CARRIED IN THE APRIL 12 EDITION OF EL TIEMPO AND ENTITLED "AN ACT OF GOOD WILL". THE CONTENT WAS A HIGHLY FAVORABLE RECEPTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S CALL TO RESCIND THE EXCLUSION OF VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR FROM THE SYSTEM OF GENERAL PREFERENCES IN THE RECENTLY PASSED TRADE BILL. THE EDITORIAL STATED THAT ONCE CONGRESS TAKES ACTION ON THE RECOMMENDATION IT WILL RECTIFY AN ERROR THAT HAS BEEN A ROADBLOCK TO SEC KISSINGER'S POLICY OF A "NEW DIALOGUE". ACCORDING TO EL TIEMPO, "PRESIDENT FORD MUST BE CREDITED WITH GOOD WILL FOR MOVING CLOSER TO HIS SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS AND (CREDITED) WITH A DESIRE TO ESTABLISH AN EQUITABLE POLICY THAT WOULD BE MORE HELPFUL TO THE NATIONS OF THE HEMISPHERE UNDER THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF FAIR TREATMENT". THE EDITORIAL THEN GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE PRESIDENT "HAS BECOME A DEFENDER OF "LATIN AMERICA'S) CAUSE..."

4. IN TWO SHORT RELATED OPINION PAGE ARTICLES, ONE IN EL TIEMPO OF APRIL 12 AND ONE IN EL ESPECTADOR OF APRIL 13, EVENTS IN SE ASIA RECEIVED MUTED COMMENT. WITHOUT MENTION OF ANY US ROLE, THE EL TIEMPO COMMENTATOR STATED THAT THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENTS IN CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM WAS INEVITABLE IN VIEW OF THE CORRUPT LONG AND THIEU REGIMES. IN AN ARTICLE HEADED "A ROMANTIC ERROR" THE EL ESPECTADOR COMMENTATOR LAMENTED THE IMPENDING FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND REMINDED READERS THAT THE US INVOLVEMENT THERE WAS NOT FOR SELFISH GAIN BUT TO FULFILL A COMMITMENT TO AN ALLY. THE ERROR OF THE US, ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, WAS ALLYING ITSELF WITH A SERIES OF CORRUPT GOVERNMENTS.

5. RECENT EVENTS IN SE ASIA WILL HAVE ONLY A MARGINAL EFFECT ON THE COLOMBIAN PERCEPTION OF THE US AND US LA POLICY. ALTHOUGH COLOMBIA FREQUENTLY FOLLOWED THE US LEAD IN VOTES AND PRONOUNCEMENTS ON SE ASIA IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, IT NEVER CONSIDERED THAT PART OF THE WORLD AS VITAL TO ITS INTERESTS. COLOMBIA, MOREOVER, PERCEIVES US LA POLICY AS SOMEWHAT SEPARATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM ITS POLICIES ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. ONLY CERTAIN GROUPS NORMALLY NOT, RPT NOT, WELL DISPOSED TO THE US WILL CLAIM TO SEE EVENTS IN SE ASIA AS EVIDENCE OF THE DECLINE OF THE US AS A WORLD POWER IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULT CHALLENGES. MOST OTHER SECTORS WILL SEE THE CLOSE OF THE CURRENT CHAPTER OF US INVOLVEMENT IN SE ASIA AS A LONG-AWAITED FREEING OF US ATTENTION FOR APPLICATION TO OTHER, MORE VITAL, AREAS OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING L.A. VAKY

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